

#5

ANAIIS NIN  
C. K. WILLIAMS  
MIKE PARKER  
COLIN WILSON  
ROBERT RUGGIERO  
JOHN M. GRUDZIEN  
AUSTIN W. FENN, JR.  
RAY HOLLAND  
MIKE FRECHETTE  
OBAMOLA  
FRANZ DOUSKEY  
PETER MOORE  
N. PARKER PRESCOTT  
BECKY MORGAN  
MARLIN GENE KAPLAN  
MARY GREGORY

# THE NOISELESS SPIDER

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## Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial board of *The Noiseless Spider* agrees with Henry Miller that the pangs of birth relate not to the body but to the spirit. It was demanded of us to know love, experience union and communion, and thus achieve liberation from the wheel of life and death. But we have chosen to remain this side of Paradise and to create through art the illusory substance of our dreams. In a profound sense we are forever delaying the act. We flirt with destiny and lull ourselves to sleep with myth. We die in the throes of our own tragic legends, like spiders caught in our own web.

**In Memoriam**  
**LYNN HAGMAN**  
**(1936-1973)**

*"And in hymself he lough right at the wo  
Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste;  
And dampned al oure werk that foloweth so  
The blynde lust, the which that may nat laste,  
And sholden al oure herte on heven caste.  
And forth he wente, shortly for to telle,  
Ther as Mercurye sorted hym to dwelle."*

GEOFFREY CHAUCER  
*Troilus and Criseyde*  
*Book V, lines 1821-1827*

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### \$100 PRIZE WINNER

Mike Frechette's "Requiem for the Masses" is the recipient of this issue's special \$100 award for the best literary work submitted to THE NOISELESS SPIDER by a student. All other contributors to this issue were given their choice of one of two books by Anais Nin, the novel A SPY IN THE HOUSE OF LOVE or the long prose poem HOUSE OF INCEST, specially autographed by the author.



(PHOTO: Marlis Schwieger)

*stories and novels including WINTER OF ARTIFICE (1939), CHILDREN OF THE ALBATROSS (1947), A SPY IN THE HOUSE OF LOVE (1954), and SEDUCTION OF THE MINOTAUR (1961).*

*Ms. Nin is best known for her extraordinary DIARY, which Henry Miller has called "a monumental confession which will take its place beside the revelations of St. Augustine, Petronius, Abélard, Rousseau, Proust, and others." Since 1961, the first four volumes of the DIARY have been published by Harcourt, Brace. Volume 5 is scheduled to appear in April 1974. By special arrangement with Anais Nin, THE NOISELESS SPIDER is privileged to offer its readers the following heretofore unpublished excerpts from Volume 5 of THE DIARY OF ANAIS NIN, a work which is surely destined to take its place among the important literary and human documents of our time.*

*ANAIIS NIN, the world-renowned author of THE DIARY OF ANAIS NIN, celebrated her 70th birthday earlier this year. A close friend and confidante of such figures as Henry Miller, Lawrence Durrell, Otto Rank, Edmund Wilson, and Antonin Artaud, she began her writing career in 1932 with a brilliant critical book, D. H. LAWRENCE: AN UNPROFESSIONAL STUDY. Since then, she has published the remarkable prose poem HOUSE OF INCEST (1936), and numerous short*

[Winter 1948]

It is not imagination which stirs in the blood obscurely at certain spectacles, certain cities, certain faces; it is memory. Some memories lie dormant, like hibernating animals, atrophied memories, but others survive in the genes and easily reappear in the present. Idea of memory very persistent. I think of it all day. I believe the body carries cells of memories down through the ages, in the same way they transmit physical traits. These memories lie dormant until aroused by a face, a city, a situation. A simple explanation of "We have lived this before." Of recognition and familiarity. Racial and collective memories have continuity, forming unconscious layers.

In California the white buildings, the sun and the palms re-create Cuba for me, childhood memories of sea, of gaiety and of a kind, caressing climate.

Have I walked away from my demons?



In San Francisco I can work better. I am not dissolved in nature.

Exhausted with writing, and with the conflict of making a river bed for the flow of the diary so that it may not seem like a diary but an inner monologue, a series of free associations accompanying the life of several characters. Not yet solved. The diary cannot be published in its entirety. How can I convert it into a Joycean flow of inner consciousness?

Last night I wanted to give up writing. It seemed wrong to make a story of Gonzalo. I felt the inhumanity of art. I thought of my fictionalizing of Paul in *Children of the Albatross*. It destroyed nothing. It touched his heart. The story of Gonzalo may be the only undestroyed image of him, because he set about to destroy himself. It may be an inspiration to other Gonzalos not to destroy themselves.

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*Fragment from Volume 5 of THE DIARY OF ANAIS NIN to be published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Spring 1974 Copyright Anais Nin.*



Last night I was a woman, hurt by memories and acknowledging the ever-recurrent continuity of love. This morning I am a writer and have come to terms with the woman by saying: "It must be sincere, it is fiction but it must be sincere, it must be truthful to the feelings if not to actual facts." And I worked gravely, sincerely.

In my fiction there is no death, as there is occasionally in the diary. Do I extract the death-dealing parts? Shall I go to the end this time and describe dissolution and death?

One handles truths like dynamite. Literature is one vast hypocrisy, a giant deception, treachery. All the writers have concealed more than they have revealed.

But, paradoxically, we create fiction out of human concern for the victims of the revelations. This concern is at the root of literature.



I remember D. H. Lawrence complaining that nature was too powerful in Mexico, that it swallowed one. If I lived there, would the need to write disappear? When the external world matches our need, our hunger, our inner world, might not the need to create cease? Morocco did that. It made me contemplative, content with a spectacle of life so vivid that it stilled all needs. Would a mere change of culture put an end to our restlessness, our dissatisfaction, our need to create what is not there?

In Acapulco I felt for the first time the slackening of this tension I suffer from in my dealings with the world. The contact was established without difficulty. I felt at one with the people and nature.

I do not feel this tension when I am writing, I am at ease in the diary. When will creation and life fuse for me, and when will I be equally at ease in both?



The fatality is the imprint we receive in childhood, at the time of our greatest plasticity, of our passive impressionism, of our helplessness before suggestion. In no period has the role

of the parents loomed as immense, because we have recognized the determinism, but at the same time an exaggeration in the size of the Enormous Parent does not need to be permanent and irretrievable. The time has come when, having completed the scientific study of the importance of parents, we now must reestablish our power to revoke their imprint, to reverse our patterns, to kill our fatal downward tendencies. We do not remain smaller in stature than our parents. Nature had intended them to shrink progressively in our eyes to human proportions while we reach for our own maturity. Their fallibilities, their errors, their weaknesses were intended to develop our own capacity for parenthood. We were to discover their human weakness not to overwhelm or humiliate them, but to realize the difficulty of their task and awaken our own human protective-ness towards their failures or a respect for their partial achievement. But to place all responsibilities upon them is wrong too. If they gave us handicaps they also gave us their courage, their obstinacy, their sacrifices, their moments of strength. We cannot forever await from them the sanction to mature, to impose on them our own truths, to resist or perhaps defeat them in our necessity to gain strength.

We cannot always place responsibility outside of ourselves, parents, nations, world, society, race, religion. Long ago it was the gods. If we accepted a part of this responsibility we would simultaneously discover our strength. A handicap is not permanent. We are permitted all the fluctuations, metamorphoses which we all so well understand in our scientific studies of psychology.

Character has ceased to be a mystery and we can no longer refuse our responsibility with the excuse that this is an unformed, chaotic, eyeless, unpredictable force which drives, tosses, breaks us at will.





MIKE PARKER

UNH Class of '67

(autobio)

*reborn 44, 67, over & over, discovered the wheel later. just say i live in the mountains wherever i can. no area necessarily tied to. married to my pack. nationality irishbuddhistgypsynativeamericanfreak. did time at univ N heaven. don't want to tell too much . . . . love to eat peyote & mushrooms & did CO at runawayhouse. facts of life mean nothing. personal history a heavy weight to carry on the road. live with the poets Rimbaud & Sappho in a rough-cut shack built near Woodstock by self & friend. living simply. writing poems. not eatin' no shit. ain't payin' no bills either.*

snowing since yesterday  
half a mountain showing  
the pond a false clearing  
& the road clear of old ruts

the evidence of life  
a broken mound where fawn  
got hung in the plow's drift

no one comes  
so the plow liberates nothing  
just making noise & muddy shoulders

— *Mike Parker*

if only  
we are

mutual shrines

if only  
we are  
as

the tortoise  
visits himself  
without knocking

like-  
wise

—*Mike Parker*

wild dog tracks  
in the gorge  
pads & nail points  
& yellow pea  
in deer prints  
some things salivate  
no avoiding it

rooster crowing at the moon  
march came in like a maniac  
outhouse door sprung a hinge  
gotta face town for flour  
NO REASON  
some things salivate

— *Mike Parker*

## Apostate

Darkness drunk  
And once proud jesuit  
Warms a new storm  
Befriending destruction.

His old herald dumb  
And twisted upside down  
This winter priest  
Winter ordained  
His kiss  
To all men who struggle  
Against the cold.

Jesu I must strike you!

You contest my strength  
And sadistically trick me  
Into never ending lent.

— *Robert Ruggiero*

## Malus

Out on the sandbar  
I find a labyrinth—  
pearls of perception  
everflowing into shallow streams.

Piercing just enough light to see  
the blessing of a thousand ships  
baptised masts;  
this inspires.

In the maritime house  
I swept the floors of this salty café

and people came and gathered,  
in the rooms made for a Sunday traveler.

Awaiting the Messiah  
from the sea  
the return at last  
of a derelict past . . .

— *John M. Grudzien*

### **Merlin Knew**

Arthur  
Holding to the hilt  
A wilting wolf  
Among the hounding pack

So sadly he feels  
The dreaming black and brackish  
In the evening tide  
As his queen insists he join the chant  
And bore the sunset with solemn sighs

And fear pours from the wolfbane mind  
The jackel terror of old age  
The liquid horror driving mad  
Damp earth the only cloak to clad  
His struggling dungheap  
From the snow . . .  
And droning winds  
Cannot drive the scent away.

Arthur loosened from the hilt  
His old friends lost with the fight  
Houndhowl psalms and  
Delicate phials spilling



All remaining balms and no use  
Roaring above the noise;  
No law in nature can kill wisdom  
Vicious from breaking on the rack  
And tamed to run on the hounding track.

— *Robert Ruggiero*

### **Poem of the Road**

Tall, slender  
olive rucksack over  
her shoulder  
she stands in late August  
pointing her thumb  
going east  
Wanderlust, road and voices  
cars passing in  
untrusting summer tours,  
she smiles  
golden hair lifting  
her eyes;  
the sky  
sparkles with sun.

*Molly Stark Trail, between  
North Bennington and  
Willington, Vermont.  
August 29, 1972.*

\* \* \*

— *Austin W. Fenn Jr.*

i feel i must confess to tides  
and why my feet  
border on the waves  
it may be awe but  
more like fear my tracks will  
be accountable.

while further down the beach  
children yell as if  
expecting to go on and on  
shattering dust

but even there the sky  
the sand in old age  
seems assured—the coral cliffs  
and sprays

have spent a long time shaping each other.  
a resemblance is near.

its been a while  
since i thought myself a child  
running unconcerned

so i bow my head and dream to  
be swallowed in the foam  
and it always seems unconscious  
i skip a stone  
into the surf  
and repent.

— Ray Holland

## **Requiem for the Masses**

### *I. Antiphon*

Torn beast:  
Dog-screams panic  
The youngest bull,  
Blood spoors incense the hunter.

His feast:  
Crouches, cowers  
And whines within its dim  
Sarcophagus.

Diseased  
By elder betrayal:  
He snuffles  
Its dung-laden entrail,  
Flings his spears  
Missing the mark  
until  
One melodically sings  
Its death dirge  
Within the heart.

“Tis done, tis done,  
Butcher the heart,  
burn the bones  
drink the blood  
Of the slain  
Man.

### *II. Interregnum*

Our hungry bellies  
Shrivelled by ten years of peace,  
Our young born, still born,  
Bitterly complacent,  
Sought a new beast . . .

The knell of rifle fire,  
Satanic thunder,  
Incense of burnt flesh,  
Cynosure . . .

Our swollen bellies give birth,  
And flute shimmering chords  
Accompany our tympani of bombs.

### III. *Anthem*

The child of coffin makers,  
As before him, sires and grand sires,  
Stands before his pride  
And condemns the blood feast,  
Stands before his nation  
And calls its children  
Queued at graveside, queued at curbside,  
Buried by books, choked by apathy . . .  
They form his funeral procession.

“Dirige, Domine, Deus meus, in conspectu tuo viam meam.  
“Dirige, Domine, Deus meus, in conspectu tuo viam meam.”

### IV. *Dirige . . .*

An old toad thunders by  
Evoking wisdom, law, order,  
Squirting his semen on his chattel,  
Spitting bat guano—

“Tragic!”

And I heard him cough again:

“Tragic.”

“He died, God bless him, in his sleep,”  
Died, God bless him, in blood-stained mud.

Once, a box of animal cookies dropped  
at the bird cage;

A precise photographic image recorded,  
absorbed, regurgitated  
Upon command.  
(And she held a finger in the air,  
Turned and fled—  
“Sie hat ängst.”  
So they said.)

An eagle swirls past  
Flopping about, muted  
As an ancient truth:  
Birds do not age  
Nor fracture the law,  
So they say.

They badger me  
About prices, colors  
Reflected, and not one  
Sees himself in mirrors.

They butcher me  
As I caper  
Against law, order, wisdom—  
Revolt is not what the toady,  
Not what the chained animal does . . .

A priest wanders next,  
In his youth tax free;  
Not even his gold crucifix  
Buys his resurrection:  
    Melt it down, mold it,  
    Shape it, fashion it—  
        pah!  
Crisscross the center  
And curse the day  
A dog shall lead and the dumb shall speak . . .  
Or must one make a trifle  
To be played on a flute,  
Or a calliope?

They would say, "The snake,  
The goat, the leprechaun,  
Find THEM.  
Categorize, define, inseminate them,  
And when you're done, tell us . . ."

But I have seen men  
Inert within dark towers,  
Smile glasseyed, cold,  
Cold slabs of meat,  
And I have seen women  
Lying with humanity,  
Their lives running down gutters,  
And passersby spit to see  
If it were blood or dye—  
I have seen an old man  
Diseased with syphilis,  
Laughing in railway stations,  
Telling his monodies  
One by one—  
None listen  
since he wants their help . . .

I have bastard friends and old friends,  
White haired mothers and indolent fathers,  
Sweaty sisters and dead brothers . . .

#### V. *Requiem for the Masses*

It is time for carnival:  
The hunter has come home  
To a land of pus-filled limbs,  
To a land of sacred democracy.  
Yet the child  
    screams travesty . . .  
To a land of atavisms,  
To a land of carnivores  
Yet the child  
    screams love me!

It is a time for carnival:  
Harlequins, toadeaters,  
Cynics and bone-fires,  
Basilisks and unicorns,  
Bugles and lyres . . .  
A dog shall lead us and the dumb shall speak,  
But the carnival  
processional  
alone must be  
Man.

— *Mike Frechette*

## WHOLE SISTER

I once said to my baby  
baby, an acceptance  
is an obligation  
to be appreciative;  
and my baby said yeah, nigger  
but to be appreciative  
aint no acceptance  
of any obligations.

— *Obamola*

## For Jane

in pure light  
you are a clear shadow  
kneeling among pillows  
where our bed is made

neglect  
is as sacrilegious as rape

let us not shuffle our feet  
or think of strategies

— *Franz Douskey*

## **Aftermath**

Dead so shortly after birth—  
Crying babies  
screaming sons or daughters!  
Cold turkey babies, fucker!  
Finally feeling the pain & agony  
that mummy  
so deliberately avoided

— *Peter Moore*

## **Revolutions**

Yes, Honey, there really are falling stars.  
Even God falls apart now and then.

While  
we give  
up the struggle  
and SLEEP  
IN MADNESS

the moon  
changes the night  
by DANCING  
circles  
IN THE SUNLIGHT.

— *N. Parker Prescott*

## War Cries

War cries  
War boys  
We're boys  
still  
The blood and the tear gas  
obscure the sight  
impede the future  
and the minds of these killers  
are damaged warped twisted  
by the hate the dead buddies  
the weight of their uniforms,

In safer quarters,  
we condemn—  
not knowing how we'd react,  
but hoping to hell  
we could have done better

— Peter Moore

## Reflections on a Death

In the hollow, emptied dawn  
down gutted passages  
of rose-sided cunts—  
death moves—  
scratching away the time  
and trips  
of sensuous quivering.

They told me once love would save.  
Gather up all my soul,  
tie it in a white bandana,  
carry it over your shoulder on a bamboo pole.

Castrate all the hopes,  
and dreams,  
strip away every organ  
leave me settling in the dust.

(There's a dead man in the back seat of the station wagon.)

They told me once love would save.

Gather up all my soul,  
tie it in a white bandana,  
carry it over your shoulder on a bamboo pole.

— *Becky Morgan*

### **The Delegates Parley a Usurious Peace in the City of Calvin**

Shooting up pistils  
all around  
the Peace Palace  
the flowers camp in beds  
precise as Candole.  
Overhead  
the green cannonade  
flashes a silent boom.  
All the little hungers  
vie in the sun  
while the rough wood broods  
tender with new skin.

In lounge and office  
the delegates are trading  
favors. Alpine-cool  
and supple of gesture  
they ply from time to time  
the enrichment  
of the back-scratcher.

At six o'clock  
the delegates depart

through the hedgerows.  
The city, fisted with banks,  
and all revved up,  
grips down on granite  
as bumper bangs bumper.  
With God's elect  
they round the fourth  
circle for home  
and no holds barred.

— *Mary Gregory*

### **Before the Mother Turned to the Kindness of Stone**

“. . . So many  
Are dead and still I win!”

— *Ovid*

The snow fell tall  
as grass and shaped  
to their hands. Handful  
patted on handful  
raised a fort.  
The children learned  
to slide bucket  
and basket down  
the only snow of their lives  
the day they played and played  
before the moon slipped up.

By morning the snow  
had swallowed coop  
and stave. Still falling  
it swiped at eaves,  
greedy for more.  
Not yet divine  
the Twin Archers were taking  
pot shots from a cloud.

Indoors Niobe, rattled  
by bickering, faced Amphion:  
“They’re your children, too!”

Amphion’s art  
could build a wall  
or trowel the peace  
with music. Tuned  
to the children, strings  
were set hopscotching  
into games.

A champion fugue  
was found to scale the window  
and scrape the blizzard off.  
But the play was all at an end.

Frail as paper  
the wall of Thebes  
reared up, tempting  
the Plague Darters.

Child by child  
Amphion’s life  
emptied into  
fifteen barrows.

No play was left nor music  
but a boulder, mother-tall,  
propped up by the slick man tongue.

— *Mary Gregory*

### **Tiger and Tamer**

Poison, you sought sterility and literature  
inside the moist earth  
of Jerusalem, and without those desperate tamers  
your treachery would be my tool:  
with your flood-drained eyes, Passion  
kicked down the depraved waiting,  
from foaming nostrils:  
chips of illumination sparkle from

the tiger's collar  
and thieves begged in the market.

A plague on Tiger and Tamer.

The incredible scream in the thatched  
jungle, and the frightened  
glaze of the diamond and the pirate.  
And a plague on the silken coat  
of the domesticated church cat  
that can only stalk like a fog  
infecting a native coast.

Now criminal of wives,  
the sweetest curse of privacy,  
sleeps in the hazen sun  
between the curdled banks.

And since I have come alone, the woman  
whom fame wavered  
in the throats is like that parched hope of purity.

We died for you while comforting the undernourished  
tigers that thrilled Tamer.  
Now I am lying, can't you see  
the disguised violence, spoken  
by a dying tiger?  
Now you are lying in my poetry  
possessed by liberal critics,  
can you infect the sanguine trauma  
of the sour literature scratched in eternity?

When I plant the seed of Tamer's  
whip, it will shudder  
at the edge of the menagerie. Mutilated claws  
obliterate their clandestine spot  
and rise among the cages  
as symbols of poetry  
dispersed throughout shelves.

— *Marlin Gene Kaplan*

Through its resourceful "foreign editor," former UNH student John Perry (Class of 1969), *THE NOISELESS SPIDER* has obtained permission to publish two remarkable letters by British author COLIN WILSON. Mr. Wilson is best known for his best-selling *THE OUTSIDER* (1956) and *THE OCCULT* (1971). These letters, written to an enthusiastic Dutch disciple of Henry Miller (*TROPIC OF CANCER*, *THE COLOSSUS OF MAROUSSI*), give us an unusually candid account of Wilson's own response to Miller as well as a vivid description of the problems Wilson himself faced as he struggled to find his own voice. The following excerpt deals solely with Wilson's own problems as an emerging writer:

Gorran Haven, Cornwall

27 April 64

Dear Henk,

\* \* \*

One of my earliest and greatest discoveries was how valuable time is, how little a single moment of it deserves to be wasted. It takes a thousand hours to learn a language thoroughly and well. We are fully alive and awake for about 100 hours every week, the rest being spent in sleep. That is 5,200 hours a year. And if our real mental lives begin at the age of 15, then we have sixty or more years of it—312,000 hours of conscious, waking life. Most people have to work a forty hour week for about fifty years of their lives—that's 100,000 hours, about a third of one's waking life. That means that in the remaining time, we could all learn a hundred languages very thoroughly, and still have time to do all the things we enjoy doing—lying in the sun, swimming in the sea, making love, fishing, watching plays and films. Now ask yourself—or any other human being—how many hours of every day are simply poured down the drain, spent in doing nothing to any purpose except 'killing time', drifting, not knowing what to do next, not really wanting to do what you are doing. Isn't it astounding—and horrifying, and shameful?

all the best  
Colin

*Excerpts from the second letter will appear in the Spring issue.*



## INTERVIEW WITH C. K. WILLIAMS

Through the good offices of Dean Douglas Robillard of the School of Arts and Sciences, the poet C. K. Williams gave two readings on the UNH campus on October 31 and November 1, 1973. Williams is the author of two books of poems, *LIES* (1969) and *I AM THE BITTER NAME* (1972), both published by Houghton Mifflin. He is presently at work on a new American version of Sophocles' *THE WOMEN OF TRACHIS*. The following is a partial transcript of an interview he gave the UNH English Club on the last day of his visit.

SPIDER: You've been talking about the present as a "golden age of translation," Charlie. What do you mean by that? And how has this fact affected your own work?

WILLIAMS: It's affected my own work profoundly because the first poetry I found interesting was poetry from other countries—because in the 50's there was such bad poetry being written here, you see. First Rilke, then Chinese poetry. Later, lots of good poets started doing translations—like Merwin, Kinnell. And it was just like all these areas of experience that were inaccessible became accessible. And now there's even more translation being done. René Char and Rimbaud, for instance.

SPIDER: Ezra Pound is usually given credit for having started this terrific outpouring of translation. And you say you're not a Poundian. Is it the man or the artist . . .?

WILLIAMS: Well, the *man*—that doesn't bother me. All his Jew-stuff is obviously pretty silly. I think it's plain silly.

SPIDER: But he bitterly *repented* this later. At least, he must be given credit for that.

WILLIAMS: Whatever it is—I mean, I'm sure someday I'll get to Pound and he'll have a meaning for me. I mean, he's a great poet. But he doesn't have knowledge of what happens in the human soul. He has a great knowledge of what goes on in the world and in literature—

SPIDER: —terrific craftsmanship.

WILLIAMS: Yeah. Maybe when I get old and gray and full of sleep.

SPIDER: There's a good deal of anti-Semitism in Henry Miller, too, according to some readers. In the TROPICS particularly. In TROPIC OF CANCER, there are some jibes—

WILLIAMS: Yeah, but he's talking about a social situation that he's probably describing accurately. I love that because of when I find Jews being racists against Black people when

they're moving in the neighborhood. He's got a great passage in TROPIC OF CAPRICORN. When the Jews moved into Brownsville, they ruined the neighborhood! Now that the Jews don't "ruin" neighborhoods anymore, it's good for them to have a little remembrance of what happened not so long ago.

SPIDER: Is it too big, too ambitious a question to ask you whether you have a conscious "philosophy of translation"?

WILLIAMS: Too big at the moment . . . tough problem. I'm so involved with—with the notion of "elevated language." When you're working with a Greek tragedy, the language is supposed to be elevated. But generally most attempts at elevated language are just dull. And then the question is how far into the colloquial do you descend before it becomes just—

SPIDER: The choruses in Sophocles are very elevated, but the dialogue itself at times—

WILLIAMS Well, I don't know. That's what I'm in the process of discovering. I'm not that experienced a translator. I've done some renderings from the Roumanian and the Sanskrit, but those were just "versions." I was working with the help of people who translated the originals for me.

SPIDER: How far along are you in your Sophocles?

WILLIAMS: Finished the first draft.

SPIDER: And you're using the English version of . . .?

WILLIAMS: . . . the Jebb *literal* translation. And I have a classicist whom I call up when I run into trouble.

SPIDER: So far do you feel you've managed to make these characters *sound* like people talking? You're aiming for an "American" version.

WILLIAMS: I don't know. That's going to be a struggle. The question is, is it going to be an archeological relic or is it going to be a play that can be *performed* with a lively sense of . . . I'm in conflict with Arrowsmith about that. I'm not sure where he wants to *hit*. He talks of what it represented

to the Greek audience—which is fine, but I think you have to find the equivalent of what it could relate to in an American audience. You obviously can't relate it to archetypal myths . . .

SPIDER: You don't know whether he's looking for a performable as opposed to readable version—

WILLIAMS: I don't know. I'd want it to be performable. *And readable!*

SPIDER: What about the problem of the poet in the “public” context? This is a problem that interests many of us. Your own poems, obviously, deal constantly with what the politicians are doing to us in the public sphere. Yet yours is a “private” voice. You're a very private person, as far as we've been able to tell. And yet the political nightmares are constantly sucking you in. Do you think that the poet can really *be* a force against what the politicians are doing to corrupt language, to threaten our sense of our own human worth? Can a poet be *heard* above—

WILLIAMS: When I was in Greece, I was struck most by how much commitment people have to the poets of their country—as being part of their consciousness, part of their values, part of how they IDENTIFY themselves! They set their songs. Theodorakis is always setting *great* poems. And the people SING them and they don't merely sing the political songs, but . . . same thing in Chile with Neruda, they'll sing his little love songs but somehow it'll carry a political message, too. But in this country there just is not that kind of *relationship* to poetry. When I was in Michigan, I had a huge fight with a bunch of the young poets there. There had been an Homage to Neruda reading and afterwards I said: “What do you think about our relationship to our society versus *his* . . . where he was considered part of the political life of the society?” And then I got into the idea that the poets here spend so much time squabbling with each other—backbiting and criticizing—that the rest of the society just thinks of us as spoiled children. And maybe we'll have to stop *that* so that we can start being listened to. And they got very furious at me.

SPIDER: . . . thereby proving your point?

WILLIAMS: Well, maybe it was a very superficial way of looking at it. Obviously, the reasons for our disregard are much more profound than how we act.

SPIDER: The usual contrast that's made is between the States and Russia. In Russia where there's censorship, where freedom of expression is not encouraged and so forth, people have to go to poetry as a contraband item, it's part of their hidden or underground selves. There's a greater urgency because it's a hard thing to come by, it's forbidden fruit.

WILLIAMS: It's forbidden fruit *here*, too.

SPIDER: Here, at least, everything can be printed. [Pause] So everything's neglected . . .?

WILLIAMS: I don't *know* exactly what it is—how poetry became so useless in this society. But most things of the spirit are "useless" in this society, somehow. The commodity value isn't very high. Painting became very big in the 60's, right? The reason it became big is that the dealers and the museums got together and pushed it as a . . . a "marketable" thing. Now I don't know whether you can do that with poetry—or whether you should. At the same time, this feeling of living in a closet—of just talking to other poets—is heart-rending.

SPIDER: Do you suppose that the fact that we're a country made up of so *many* ethnic strains—European, African, Asian—we don't really possess a common language. English is, in a very real sense, an "acquired" language for most Americans, an overlay.

WILLIAMS: Oh, I don't think that's anything but a first-generation problem. Maybe second. Most people in America now are third-generation people.

SPIDER: Do you feel we've got a *common* lingo in this country?

WILLIAMS: I certainly do. And I think it's a very lively and creative one. It's got great slang bases. And different ethnic groups tend to enrich the language. How much Jewish echoes are in the language? How much Black echoes?

SPIDER: What do you think poets could *do* to make this marvelously supple and variegated language more readily available to people at large in our society?

WILLIAMS: I would shoot all the high school English teachers for a start! Because generally they destroy poetry. I'm serious! I gave some symposiums to high school teachers once on how to teach contemporary poetry. And I tried this, and I tried that. And finally I realized it would be better if you didn't "teach" it at all. Just like music. You don't "teach" music to little kids. You just let them *listen* to it and if they're interested in playing it, you show them how to play it. What you *should* do is have recordings. And don't try to find out what it "means." Kids don't know the difference between a B-sharp diminished and an F-sharp. They know what music *is*, but they're expected to know what an iambic pentameter means and what this and that means. It's absurd, it kills, I hate—

SPIDER: The terminology stands in the way of the *reality* of poems . . . ?

WILLIAMS: Of course. It becomes a chore. But I think the deeper question is, politically—I think the politicians in this country have just, somehow, masterfully cut people off from their consciousness. You cannot be conscious in this country without being *overwhelmed* with things. Without misery. I think television was the greatest invention of all time for the politicians—to put people to sleep! If you don't have television, people would have to talk about what their lives are. With television, it's *symbolized* and you try to live up to the symbols. You get sprays for your body, you get girl friends that look like Donna Reed. And you don't think. The poet's task is obviously to give *back* the spirit that TV has taken from us. But we're losing the war. The politicians are destroying us faster than we can create ourselves. We're walking around in a bath of novocaine . . .

SPIDER: Do you want to talk about influences a bit? Who are your intellectual "ancestors"?

WILLIAMS: I don't think much about my "ancestors," but . . . NIETZSCHE! Nietzsche would, I think, be a huge influence

on me. I'm very much a Freudian in my vision of the structure of the mind. Poetically, it's just a mish-mash. I suppose the first *lively* influence was Rilke. I liked Yeats, but in a sort of school way. After Rilke, a lot of Japanese stuff was really clarifying—Chinese, so many poets around now who've given me something toward *myself* . . .

SPIDER: How important was William Carlos Williams to you?

WILLIAMS: At one period, his clarification of the language was a very profound gift to me. It allowed me to de-literize myself, made me realize that poetry is actually human speech. He's a master of speech who makes poetry *sound* like talk. Neglected, strangely, at the moment. Perhaps because the professional taste-makers prefer poets like Wallace Stevens who can be dissected! Williams' stuff makes you aware that you can BE—maybe a doctor, a *person*. Whereas Stevens' poems are in a sheltered place, apart. Actually, I wouldn't mind owning my own insurance company! (*Pause*) The Hartford Insurance Company is the outfit that I.T.T. bought, come to think of it!

SPIDER: Perhaps that's what the hermetic tendency in poetry leads to in the end. You get swallowed up by I.T.T.! Symbolic?

WILLIAMS: I think we might be making some enemies . . . !

SPIDER: Are you conscious of something Chekhovian about these new poems of yours which you've been reading on our campus?

WILLIAMS: I love Chekhov. I was reading him this summer. That's the best compliment I've ever gotten about them.

SPIDER: One gets the sense they resist being "analyzed." they're so much a part of what we already *are* and *feel* that they seem to enter right into our psychic subjectivity, they're something *out there*—on a printed page.

WILLIAMS: One guy came up to me after the first reading and said: "You don't use much craft, *do ya?*" Then a woman

came up to me and said: "They're not very CONSTRUCTED, are they?"

SPIDER: Charlie, what advice would you give to a young would-be poet today? What do you feel are the qualities a person should cultivate to go on writing?

WILLIAMS: I don't know *what* I should say. Er . . . I think it's just luck! I think it's just chance that keeps you going. I don't know . . .

SPIDER: But there's a certain amount of active, conscious . . .

WILLIAMS: . . . willing.

SPIDER: . . . *willing!*

WILLIAMS: I would say that if you tend to deal too much with poetry, you'll get discouraged. In other words, if you are a painter—I wouldn't want you to spend all your time in museums. Because . . . because your values become determined too artistically. And if you're a poet, you become too "literary." You have to be aware of all the adventures that are happening. Otherwise, you become cloistered and not only do your values get over-determined but your *impulses* are! To associate with a lot of other poets too young is, I think, harmful—in the sense that you get discouraged just because there's *no air!* You find you're always talking shop, always thinking about poetry. Instead of about LIFE—and it makes for poetry that's dead and a soul that's dead. And if you have a dead soul, you can't control it. I think studying everything from witch-doctoring to physics, you have to know what's going on in the mind, in the heart of the people of your time. Otherwise . . . if you only know what's going on in poets' minds, you've got a distorted view of reality. I don't mean being simply "open to life" because that's too passive. You have to go out and GET it. To be open is just to lay there and hope things are going to fall on you. It isn't going to happen that way. You've got to go out and . . . and POSSESS!

SPIDER: You make it sound so easy to write with your own blood. You take what's in your heart and you're able to put it

into words so well. How do you do it? There's obviously immense craft involved in the way you express your own experience.

WILLIAMS: What you say is flattering and I'm glad you feel that, but it doesn't feel that way when I'm writing. It feels as though I'm taking a vivid experience and trying to make it as coherent as it can be—as *powerful*, if that's the word. And often the experience becomes a complete untruth—a complete fiction, which can bother you. I mean, you can start thinking that you're living in an unreal world. But I've sort of overcome that now, I just twist experiences—the main thing is you're CREATING experiences, they aren't necessarily *your* blood, they're human blood. They become part of the consciousness of Man.

SPIDER: The fact that you called your first book of poems LIES intrigued quite a number of us . . .

WILLIAMS: I don't like to talk about that because I have no articulate reason for having done it.

SPIDER: You just called it LIES, right?

WILLIAMS: The obvious reason is because of how impossible truth is, how inaccessible it is. And no matter how you attempt it, it ends up being a lie. What I'm trying to do is make as many of my own gropings and uncertainties as possible carry over into the poems. I want the reader to keep in mind that I'm a *person*, that I'm not just a poetry machine.

SPIDER: Charlie, I think most of us have had no trouble keeping that in mind during your two days at the University of New Haven.

INTERVIEWERS: *Brian Wallace, Bert Mathieu*



*The next issue of THE NOISELESS SPIDER will include a long interview with poet Allen Ginsberg. Watch for it!*

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*The Noiseless Spider* would like to give special thanks to Prof. Bertrand Mathieu for his contribution to the birth and continuation of the magazine.

A noiseless patient spider,  
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood  
isolated,

Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast  
surrounding,

It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament,  
out of itself,

Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding  
them.

And you O my soul where you stand,  
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans  
of space,

Carelessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking  
the spheres to connect them,

Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the  
ductile anchor hold,

Till the gossamer thread you fling catch  
somewhere, O my soul.

Walt Whitman